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## Fire Response, Farm Bill, WASDA and the Future of California Agriculture



Firefighters' tent camp at the Nevada County Fairgrounds, Grass Valley, CA. (Photo: 17th District Ag. Association)

**"California's unprecedented number of fires this early in the season make it all the more important that we use every tool at our disposal to protect property and save lives."** -- [Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger](#)

I am very pleased with the aggressive response from CDFA's Agricultural Security & Emergency Response Office ([ASER](#)) during the recent wildfires throughout the state. For more than a month ASER has helped coordinate assistance to many fire-ravaged communities and supported the state's [emergency operations centers](#) with staff. Our division of [Fairs and Expositions](#) team has worked with the staffs of 15 different fairs to make emergency facilities available to shelter people, livestock and pets evacuating the fire zones. Hundreds of animals were housed at some of these facilities on a temporary basis, including horses, donkeys, cows, goats, sheep,

pigs, llamas, alpacas, dogs, cats and assorted small pets. Several fairgrounds were used as incident command posts, staging facilities, central distribution points, mobilization centers and fire camps. CDFA veterinarians were dispatched to various locations to assist with evacuated animals. The response from our employees did not go unnoticed.



Director Leon Panetta of the Panetta Institute, spoke at the annual [WASDA](#) meeting hosted by CDFA this month and attended by ag officials from the 13 western states. (Photo: J. Eddy, CDFA)

Looking toward a better tomorrow, I see the recently passed 2008 Farm Bill as an investment in America's future. It contains new benefits specifically for California agriculture and consumers in this state, including new [specialty crop block grants](#). Despite many obstacles, the [Senate](#) and [House](#) took historic strides in farm policy by passing the 2008 Farm Bill ([H.R. 6124, the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008](#)). California farmers and ranchers can celebrate this bill that helps maintain the food security of this nation and invests in agriculture. More than two years ago,

[Governor Schwarzenegger tasked CDFA](#) with leading a state effort to make a better Farm Bill that is more California-friendly. This new [Farm Bill](#) provides an investment in the nation's food, feed, fiber and fuel system we depend upon. This legislation incorporates many improvements for California. It includes increased investment in the specialty crop sector, additional investments in nutrition programs and renewable energy, and positive reforms of conservation programs that help protect California's working landscapes.

I was also very gratified by the response from industry leaders and the ag community to the seven listening sessions hosted by CDFA and the [State Board of Food & Agriculture](#) in June and July for the [California Agricultural Vision initiative](#). During each of these meetings from 30 to 50 individuals offered public comments or testimony. Many more listened in a forum designed to gather input as we craft a California strategic agricultural vision to carry us forward to the year 2030. Over 150 links to [submitted comments](#) are now posted now on the CDFA website. We will also make available online the transcribed testimony from each session.

As always, thank you for your support of California agriculture.

## A.G. Kawamura

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(L-R) A.G. Kawamura, Al Montna and State Ag Board members at the Ag Vision listening session, San Diego County Farm Bureau. Such sessions were held regionally in six cities during June and July, 2008. (Photo: N. Lungren, CDFA)